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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities. It notes the value of internship and other work-based learning programs that allow the employer and student to "try each other out." The paper points out that under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers are required to make reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. Data are reported showing that 71% of such accommodations cost $500 or less. The data also indicate that companies realize a return of $28.69 in benefits for every dollar spent on accommodation. Two federal programs that provide tax credits to small businesses making such accommodations are briefly described. Suggestions are also offered about where employers can find interns and employees with disabilities and about ways to determine appropriate accommodations. Which accommodations are the employee's responsibility and which are the employer's are then specified. A chart lists eight national organizations, with contact information, that can provide information on employing people with disabilities. To accompany this publication, DO-IT has created a short videotape by the same title. (DB)

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ED 477 210

Finding the Gold: Hiring the Best and the Brightest
Tips for Employers To Hire Individuals with Disabilities

University of Washington

2002

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Finding Gold: Hiring the Best and the Brightest

DO-IT Tips for Employers to Hire Individuals with Disabilities

It's difficult to find and retain qualified employees. Many companies report their number one problem to be locating talented workers. The information technology industry reports a shortage of about ten thousand workers annually. Recruitment of quality employees comes at a high cost. Many employers have found that one way to gain an edge in recruiting is to identify talented people before they graduate from college. At their companies, internship programs are used to develop pools of individuals from which they may ultimately hire. Internships and other work-based learning programs give the employer and the student opportunities to "test each other out" and determine if they make a good match, saving the company time and money in recruitment efforts. These programs also give the company an opportunity to participate in a student's training and, for a student with a disability, allow both the student and the employer to test different worksite accommodations.

Corporate success depends on attracting the best minds out there, and that means focusing on ability. However, many people are nervous around people with disabilities. They're afraid they'll say or do the wrong thing. Many people have not had opportunities to interact with people with disabilities and are not aware of the alternative methods they use to complete standard tasks. We need to look beyond our own perceptions of what a person with a disability is capable of, or how they will perform in a work environment.

In a world where technology is a necessary aspect of almost every business, physical ability is seldom a limitation. Intellect and technical capability are what count. Assistive technology and other accommodations make it possible for people with disabilities to be competitive in today's labor market. People with disabilities represent an underutilized labor pool.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that employers with fifteen or more employees make reasonable accommodations in the workplace for employees with disabilities. Accommodations are to be made on a case-by-case basis and may not be required when costs create an undue hardship. These accommodations usually cost less than the employer expects. Dan Hodge, Recruitment Manager for AirTouch Cellular, remarked that the cost of making "accommodations for a student or for an employee are much less than we ever anticipate they are going to be in a situation. And, typically, the accommodations are easy for us to make." In fact, the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a toll-free service that advises businesses and individuals about accommodations, reports that fifty percent of all accommodations cost less than five hundred dollars.

Cost of Accommodations	Percentage
0	20%
$1-$500	51%
$501-$1000	11%
$1,001-$1,500	3%
$1,501-$2,000	3%
$2,001-$5,000	8%
$5,000+	4%

Companies reported a return of $28.69 in benefits for every dollar spent on accommodations. In fact, there are two tax credit programs available to assist with workplace accommodations. The *Disabled Access Tax Credit* is a credit available to small businesses. It gives a fifty percent credit for expenditures over $250 that don't exceed $10,250. The maximum benefit is $5,000. The *Architectural Barrier Tax Deduction* allows businesses to deduct up to $15,000 of the costs incurred to remove physical barriers. To obtain more information about these programs, contact:

Office of Chief Counsel, IRS
1111 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20224
(202) 622-3110

Where Can I find Interns and Employees with Disabilities?

The first step in attracting applicants with disabilities is as simple as adding a statement outlining your interest in receiving applications from a diversity of people, including those with disabilities to your company's existing recruitment materials. Next, disseminate announcements in a variety of settings.

On college campuses, there are several offices that will be able to assist you with your recruitment efforts. **Career services offices** and **cooperative education programs** are used to working with employers and assisting them with locating talented student interns. A business can work with these offices to expand recruitment efforts to college students with disabilities.

Academic departments are often aware of specific students who might be good matches for your position and business environment. Establishing contacts with college faculty and staff can assist recruiters with locating skilled employees.

Campus **disabled student services** and **access** offices (under many different names) provide academic accommodations to students and staff. Many offices have newsletters and e-mail discussion groups for their students. Ask if you can advertise job and internship openings through these established methods of communication. Contact your local colleges, universities, and technical schools to inquire about these possibilities.

Your state **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**, **Department of Services for the Blind**, **Employment Security**, and **Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities** can also provide you with referrals for qualified candidates.

Local communities often have a number of agencies that serve people with disabilities as they pursue employment opportunities. They are listed in your local telephone directory.

The following page lists national resources that are rich with information about working with people with disabilities.

How do I Determine Appropriate Accommodations?

The **employee** or **intern** with a disability is always your best resource when it comes to determining appropriate workplace accommodations. He/she knows what will be needed to succeed on the job. Chances are, he/she will also know potential vendors if equipment needs to be purchased.

The college **disabled student services** office can assist you when determining appropriate

AHEAD (Association on Higher Education and Disability). AHEAD is a member organization comprised of Disabled Student Services officers of higher education institutions. This organization can provide you with contact information for offices in your area.	AHEAD 614-488-4972 (voice/TTY) 614-488-1174 (FAX) *http://www.ahead.org/*
DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology). DO-IT works to increase the successful participation of people with disabilities in academic programs and careers. DO-IT uses adaptive technology and the Internet to increase productivity, participation and independence. It provides instructional materials (printed, videotaped, and WWW) regarding the transition from high school to college and school to work, as well as accessible libraries, labs and inclusive school environments.	DO-IT University of Washington 206-685-DOIT (voice/TTY) 888-972-DOIT (voice/TTY) 206-221-4171 (FAX) *doit@u.washington.edu* *http://www.washington.edu/doit/* 509-328-9331 (voice/TTY) Spokane Office
ENTRY POINT!, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) ENTRY POINT! Is an internship program for college students with disabilities majoring in computer science, engineering, mathematics, or physical science. Contact ENTRY POINT! to inquire about becoming a part of this program.	ENTRY POINT! 202-326-6649 (voice/TTY) 202-371-9849 (FAX) *http://www.entrypoint.org/*
Office of Disability Employment Policy U.S. Department of Labor/State Liasons. The Office of Disability Employment Policy expands the previous programs and services of the President's Committe on Employment of People school. Their experience providing accommodations for that student in the classroom will be useful to you when determining appropriate accommodations on the job.	Office of Disability Employment Policy U.S. Department of Labor/State Liasons 202-376-6200 202-376-6205 (TTY) *infoodep@dol.gov* *http://www.dol.gov/odep/*
I-NABIR, The Association of Projects with Industry. I-NABIR is an organization of federally-funded programs that provides employment services for people with disabilities under the guidance of employers. Contact I-NABIR for locations of projects in your area.	I-NABIR, The Association of Projects with Industry 202-543-6353 *inabir@paltech.com*
Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). RSA oversees programs that help people with disabilities gain employment, such as state vocational rehabilitation offices. State and local vocational rehabilitation programs are listed in your telephone directory.	Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 202-205-8719
Social Security Administration, Project ABLE. Project ABLE is a national resume database which offers an applicant pool of individuals with disabilities who are receiving Social Security or Supplemental Social Security benefits.	Project ABLE 757-441-3362 757-441-3374 (FAX) *projable@opm.gov*
Workforce Recruitment Program. The Workforce Recruitment Program is a joint effort between the President's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, the Department of Defense, and the Job Accommodation Network. Employers may request a pre-screened database of college students with disabilities available for summer or permanent positions.	Workforce Recruitment Program 800-232-9675 (voice/TTY)

accommodations for a student worker from that school. Their experience providing accommodations for that student in the classroom will be useful to you when determining appropriate accommodations on the job.

State **vocational rehabilitation** offices and other **community agencies** that serve people with disabilities can also provide useful information.

The **Job Accommodation Network** (JAN) was established in 1984 to assist businesses and individuals with questions about accommodations. In 1990, their services expanded to provide information about the ADA. For additional information, contact JAN at 800-526-7236 (voice/TTY) or *jan@jan.icdi.wvu.edu*.

Who is responsible for providing accommodations?

The **employee** or **intern** is responsible for providing personal accommodations such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, and personal attendants.

In most cases, it is the **employer's** responsibility to provide on-site job accommodations for an employee. It is sometimes possible, however, for the employer to receive tax credits and incentives for doing so. Your state division of **vocational rehabilitation** can assist you with obtaining information about these programs.

If the worker is an intern, however, the **school** and the **business** should **collaborate** to provide reasonable accommodations. For example, in some cases, the school may loan the student and the employer the necessary adaptive technology for the length of the internship experience.

Videotape and Training Materials

To accompany this publication, DO-IT has created a short videotape by the same title. In addition, comprehensive training materials for staff, titled *Career Development and Students with Disabilities*, are available. Send a check to DO-IT for $25 or $60, respectively, to purchase the videotape or training materials.

Grants and gifts fund DO-IT publications, videotapes, and programs to support the academic and career success of people with disabilities. Contribute today by sending a check to DO-IT, Box 355670, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195-5670.

Your gift is tax deductible as specified in IRS regulations. Pursuant to RCW 19.09, the University of Washington is registered as a charitable organization with the Secretary of State, State of Washington. For more information, call the Office of the Secretary of State, 800-322-4483.

About DO-IT

The University of Washington helps individuals with disabilities transition to college and careers through DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology). DO-IT is primarily funded by the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the State of Washington. The DO-IT CAREERS (*Careers, Academics, Research, Experiential Education and Relevant Skills*) project created this publication and the accompanying videotape with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, and Office of Special Education Programs (#H078C60047). However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. For more information, to be placed on the mailing list, or to request materials in an alternative format, contact:

DO-IT
University of Washington
Box 355670
Seattle, WA 98195-5670
doit@u.washington.edu
http://www.washington.edu/doit/
206-221-4171 (FAX)
206-685-DOIT (voice/TTY)
888-972-DOIT (voice/TTY) WA, outside Seattle
509-328-9331 (voice/TTY) Spokane office
DO-IT Director: Sheryl Burgstahler, Ph.D.

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